

CHINA BULLETIN

of the

FAR EASTERN OFFICE

Division of Foreign Missions, NCCC/USA

475 Riverside Drive, New York 27

Vol. IX, No. 21

November 23, 1959

Francis P. Jones, Editor

Wallace C. Merwin, Executive Secretary

AUSTRALIAN FREE CHURCH VISIT TO CHINA

A party of six Australian churchmen - two Presbyterian, two Methodist, one Baptist and one Churches of Christ - visited the churches of Russia, Czechoslovakia, and China during July of this year. Their period in China was from July 15 to 22, just a week. Apparently none of them had ever been in China before, so they had no firm basis on which to judge what they saw, but the comments in the published report of the two Methodist members of the delegation show a sympathetic awareness of some of the elements in the situation.

The invitation came only from Russia and Czechoslovakia, but they managed to wangle an inclusion of China in their itinerary. It is evident that the churches in the first two countries are on a much firmer basis, which of course is what we should expect, and that they are in no danger of being submerged by the Communist tide. The delegation reports a similar optimism on the part of the Chinese Christian leaders whom they met, but the delegation itself "could not help wondering sometimes what the future of the Church is to be." They sensed a greater reserve in China than in the other two countries regarding establishing closer relations with the Western church. "In China there was a cautious willingness shown, but there are difficulties associated perhaps with the suspicion of 'Western imperialism' to be overcome before fuller relationship can be expected."

They were met at Peking by Dr. Chao Fu-san, described as Dean of the Theological Faculty there, and he accompanied them throughout their visit, going with them from Peking to Shanghai and then to Canton. They met with Christian leaders in both Peking and Shanghai, and apparently not in Canton. Of these they say, "They gave us full information on all aspects of the Church in China and answered freely, and we thought frankly, the many questions which we put to them while we were there." (Compare with this the report we published in the Nov. 3, 1958 Bulletin of the very careful briefing by the Religious Affairs Bureau which Christian leaders received before meeting visitors.)

In Peking they met with the following church leaders: Chao Fu-san, Newton Chiang (now described as Professor, evidently has no administrative responsibility now), Dr. T. C. Chao, Bishop Timothy Lin, Dr. J. F. Li, Rev. Yen Chia-li (Should this be Rev. Yen Chia-le, referred to under Church News?), Rev. Shan Le-tien, Rev. Liu Chung-ho (Episcopalian), Rev. Chang Ying-chieh, Rev. Yang Chou-huai, Kang Hsueh-ching, Miss Wong Yu-hua, and Rev. Shih Chi-shang. (The most notable absence from this list is the Rev. P. H. Wang, concerning whom we have already noted the report that he has been denounced as a rightist and dismissed from Christian work. The absence of his name here would seem to confirm that report. Others we might have expected to be there in the meeting are such CCC leaders as Rev. Shao Feng-yuan and K'ang Te-sheng.)

Issued bi-weekly to keep mission boards and missionaries informed on Christian work in China. Information from Chinese church magazines and other Chinese sources is passed on as objectively as possible, with a minimum of interpretation. When interpretation is necessary, it is enclosed in parentheses as the comment of the editor. ANNUAL RATES: Domestic, \$2.50; Overseas, Firstclass \$4.00, Secondclass \$3.00. Airmail \$5.00 in 15¢ zone, \$7.00 in 25¢ zone.

This meeting lasted four hours, during which the delegation was given a very definite statement on the present attitude of the Chinese Church to the State and to the West. "Missionaries are generally regarded before 'liberation' as agents for Western imperialism, the Church built on a semi-colonial pattern is thought of as foreign, and Christian converts strangers to the real current political life of the people."

"The leaders spoke critically of the World Council of Churches, claiming that it was to a great extent in the hands of U. S. A. churches and had been unfair in its attitude to Formosa and in its statements during the Korean War. Dr. T. C. Chao recalled at length his association with the World Council of Churches as one of its Vice-Presidents (Sic! He really was one of its Presidents.) and the circumstances which led to his resignation. Despite its isolation from the rest of the Christian world the Church in China is well aware of what is taking place within the Ecumenical Movement."

In Shanghai they met with the following leaders: Dr. Y. T. Wu, Chairman of the Three Self Movement and Moderator of the Church of Christ in China; Rev. C. W. Li, Secretary General of the National Committee of the Three Self Movement, and pastor of Shanghai Community Church; Bishop Tseng Chien-yi, General Secretary of the Sheng Kung Hui (Episcopal); Dr. Kiang Wen-han, General Secretary of the United China Christian Publishers, and Associate General Secretary of the YMCA National Committee; Rev. Huang Pei-yung, Associate General Secretary of the Central Conference of the Methodist Church (American) in China (George Wu is General Secretary), and pastor of the Shanghai Community Church; Rev. Ch'i Ch'ing-ts'ai, Chairman of the China Baptist Convention and pastor of Grace Church; and Rev. Chao Fu-san from Peking. (It is worth noting that as late as July 1959 these men were still being introduced to visitors under their separate denominational labels.) From notes taken during the meeting the writer notes that these Chinese leaders made the following points:

1. The Church through the Three Self Movement was seeking to find the means of making Christians in China into one true fellowship, and of rooting the Church in the soil, so as to bear a true Christian witness to the people. At the time of "Liberation" they were worried and could not discern the future. Today, with grateful hearts, they knew that the Lord of Glory and of History was leading them to a truer witness than the Church had ever known in China. The trend in the Church is for her to be identified with China and her people to a greater extent than ever before. The Church supports the leadership of the Communists because of the more abundant life they are bringing to the masses of the people. The basic interest of the Government and the Party is the welfare of the people, and so the Government and the Church have a common aim. Christians and pastors have to work hard, but they do this gladly for they want to share in the strivings of the people. "The Christian community has found a proper place in the life of the country - distinct from (because we are Christians) and at the same time identified with our people."

2. The Movement is working towards Christian unity. "After one hundred years of Christianity we had no Church of our own. Basically we were a Mission Field." The Church, they said, was divided and dismembered. There were seven or eight branches of the Baptist confession, each with a different emphasis. When they got together they found that there was practically no difference fundamentally between them, yet walls of division had been built. They began to practice mutual respect and have now moved on to the regular holding of joint services. At present a process of dissolving denominational divisions without loss of emphasis is going on. (Note here the distinction drawn between joint services - such as we commonly see in the U. S. A. during the slack summer season - and the actual dissolving of denominational divisions. The latter has evidently still not been accomplished.)

3. The Movement is taking Christians back to the Bible and painfully seeking to find God's word and will for them in the new day of a Communist State. Before "Liberation" all kinds of strange sects came, mostly from the U. S. A. The country was flooded with literature which we have found since had little relevance for us. "We have been thrust back," one speaker said, "upon the living word of God which is at once eternal and yet timely to our situation."

The delegation visited five different churches in Shanghai on Sunday, and made the following report about them: Holy Trinity Cathedral three services a day - morning 700 present, afternoon 300, evening 150-200. Moore Memorial Methodist three services - morning 700, after-

noon 200, evening 200. Grace Church Baptist three services - morning 800, afternoon 200, evening 150. Zion Church Pentecostalist, built in 1953 - three services. Community Church two services - morning 600-700, evening 400. They noted that a Sunday School was being conducted at Community Church during the morning service. "The congregations we saw seemed relaxed in their worship, with no sense of tension."

"We were shown the religious bookshop and the Bible Society, where the Scriptures and hymn books and other Christian literature are prepared in Chinese and printed by the church on paper supplied by the State."

They had an interview with the Roman Catholic Bishop in Peking, in which the latter said that his church had dissociated itself from Rome. He added that while it was prepared to acknowledge the Vatican in all things spiritual it found Vatican politics against the interest of the people and Government of China.

They were told of many instances of assistance from the Government to the Church. Rents are paid to the Church for all buildings taken over. Grants have been made for repairs and maintenance in several cases. "There have been fears and anxieties," said one speaker. "It has not been easy for us to adjust ourselves to the new situation. In the early period there was a feeling of uncertainty as to the future of the Church. We were afraid. We were prepared for martyrdom. Now we are no longer afraid. Since so many Chinese people have some kind of religious faith it was necessary to give these protection under our Constitution. We have come to see that the Church can live peacefully and prosperously under a Communist order."

The delegation was impressed by the high moral tone evident in the life of the people, both of Russia and of China. "In China the Church expressed glad recognition of the State's success in sweeping away drunkenness, gambling, prostitution, the drug traffic, horse-racing and dog-racing. It could be said that there is almost a Puritan element running through the social life of both Russia and China."

This report is signed by the two Methodist representatives in the delegation, Rev. G. D. Brimacombe and Rev. C. G. Gribble.

STUDY, LABOR, AND UNIFICATION

These are said to have been the three keynotes of the report of the past year of Christian work in Hangchow. 33 delegates and 22 accredited visitors met together in August in the Happiness Bridge Church in Hangchow. Rev. Niu Chih-fang, the Chairman of the Hangchow Three Self Movement, made the report for the past year which stressed these three points. In the study of the past year, preachers came to realize that they all belonged to the exploiter and parasite class, and therefore began to desire to reform themselves through labor. They express gratitude to the Party and the Government for having made this possible by assigning them, along with Roman Catholic priests, to work in the Eleventh Factory.

They all recognized that the unification of the churches was a great step forward. The elderly pastor Wu P'o-wo said, "Since unification the proper religious activities of the Hangchow churches have been receiving the protection of the Government. (This sounds strange. Hadn't they before?) From spring of this year, the number of worshippers has been steadily increasing, and now in each church we are carrying out the work of examining and registering each of the new inquirers. (Note that there are new inquirers, and that they have to be registered.) One of the Christian workers in the Eleventh Factory said, "The factory worship at the Eleventh Factory, because of restrictions in the use of electricity, was formerly set for Friday, but due to the intervention of the Defense Department and the Religious Affairs Bureau, this was changed to Sunday, thus giving us a better opportunity for religious life." (What he means by "factory worship" - ch'ang li-pai - is not too clear, but probably means only the rest day. It is not likely that a worship service was actually conducted at the factory.)

Certain of their number are assigned to study the history of the past, to find what instances of imperialistic aggression there were among the missionaries in Hangchow. They reported that they had visited 140 different individuals and made an extensive study of the materials in the provincial library. Another group is carrying on a campaign to eradicate white ants.

In line with the economy half of the current slogan, "Increase production, cut down consumption", the writer reports with satisfaction that the whole conference cost only \$15. This economy was achieved by having the whole group of 55 eat their meals at the Eleventh Factory eating the regular fare served up to the workers.

THE ENDICOTTS IN CHINA

The October number of The Canadian Far Eastern Newsletter was largely written in China, one section of the Endicott report being dated October 5 from Peking, and one October 7 from Loyang. They write, "Before we left Peking we spent an evening with Bishop K. H. Ting and Rev. W. S. Chao (Should this be F.S. Chao?) and learned a great deal about the church - more on this later." We shall await his report on this conversation and on his later contacts with the church with great interest.

They were in Peking for the great October First parade and sat in the reviewing stand. The first part of the parade was military, infantry, tanks, etc., then came dancers in gay costumes, then thousands of youth in sports costumes. The main part of the parade was given over to tens of thousands of workers, who filed past with models of their machinery, food products and production graphs. Great masses of students were also in the parade.

In the evening there was a banquet for 5,000 guests in the dining hall of the new Parliament buildings, at which Chou En-lai and Khrushchev were the speakers.

They describe a commune which they visited, and after reporting the improved production achieved have this to say about family life in a commune: "We have not seen anywhere the so-called 'barracks' for men and women where they live separately. That may be the case in some scattered, pioneering places. But in most of the communes the people live exactly where they were when the commune was organized. When they build new homes, of brick, they build to keep the families together." The people there knew of the American propaganda about the breaking up of families, and their only comment was, "How can the American people be so stupid as to believe such lies?"

From Loyang they went to the Three Gate Gorge Dam on the Yellow River, and from there by train to Chengtu. The next number of their Bulletin should have illuminating comments about their old home region.

CHURCH NEWS

The representatives of religion on the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conferences and among the deputies of the National People's Congress met on or about August 30 with various "non-party" democrats to support the government's economic plan. Among the speakers at this meeting were Buddhists Chao Pu-chu and Chu Tsan, Catholic Pi Shu-shih, Taoist Chen Ying-ning, and Protestants Yen Chia-le (said to be a member of the standing committee of the National Committee of the Three Self Movement, but otherwise unidentified) and Chao Tzu-chen (Dr. T. C. Chao). The latter is described as principal of the Yenching Union Theological Seminary, which is an interesting indication that his standing with the Government now seems to be completely restored.

The well-known Red Dean of Canterbury, Hewlett Johnson, visited China the latter part of October. While in Peking he was banqueted by Kuo Mo-jo, Chairman of the China Peace Committee, and received by Premier Chou En-lai. On the latter interview he was accompanied by Bishop K. H. Ting, President of the Nanking Union Theological Seminary. Later he went to Sian and Chengtu.

The September 7 Tien Feng has an announcement of a new book for sale, the first such announcement for many months. And this one is not really a new book, but only a reprint of an earlier one, a hymnbook of 170 songs first printed in 1956. Intended for country churches, it includes 45 short choruses as well as more conventional length hymns, the latter presumably taken from Hymns of Universal Praise. The melody edition sells for 35¢ and the words only edition for 25¢.

GENERAL NEWS

Amritananda, Vice-president of the World Fellowship of Buddhists and himself a Nepalese, stated in Peking on October 25 that his visit of more than two months to China had convinced him that there was true freedom of religion in China. "It is true that the Communist Party does not encourage religion, just as we Buddhists do not encourage people to believe in other religions. But the Communist Party has never forced any one to forsake his religion, and the people have complete freedom of choice in this matter.